



SEND NETWORK VALUES



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INTRODUCTION

MICAH MILLICAN

We live in a unique time. Day after day an onslaught of horrific headlines fill our minds and burden our hearts. One thing is certain: North America is in desperate need of the gospel! Every day we encounter men, women, and children who are lost and destined to spend eternity separated from God. This is the reality of the world.

Send Network is concerned about those far from God and strategically works to help them draw nearer to God. We long to see a multiplying church in every community across North America, bringing the hope of the gospel to those in need.

Multiplying churches discover, develop, and deploy church planting teams from within. Every Send Network church is a multiplying church in the making, and we want every church to discover their next step in the journey to multiply. If we are ever going to see a movement of church planting sweep across North America, it will be because churches and church planters have multiplication in their DNA.

To accomplish this vision, Send Network is driven by three core values: *family*, *multiplication*, and *restoration*. In this book, we will address each of these values — hearing from seasoned and successful church planters, pastors, and ministry leaders about how these values are embodied in their planting efforts. Let's begin by defining what we mean by each of these core values.

FAMILY

Send Network is a family of churches and individuals locking arms in life and ministry. We are not at our best when we are alone; even God himself said being alone “is not good,” (Genesis 2:18). We need each other, and together, we can do far more than we could ever do alone.

Planters need other planters who are not *like* brothers but who are *actually* brothers. Planting wives need other planting wives who are not *like* sisters but who are *actually* sisters. And churches need other churches who don’t operate with a competitive mindset, but see and treat one another like family. It has been said, “If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.” Send Network seeks to do the latter through churches and individuals locking arms in life and ministry.

MULTIPLICATION

Living organisms reproduce. It’s an essential mark of health and maturity. The same is true with planting churches. No church sets out to be the final link in the Great Commission chain, and we want every Send Network church to see itself as a multiplying church in the making. But planting one church is hard enough. How could we even think about planting other churches? To this end, Send Network seeks to equip churches and planters with practical tools to multiply their churches, again and again.

We must learn how to multiply effectively if we hope to reach North America. In the following pages, several church planters, whose congregations have birthed additional churches, give practical advice on how to do just that — including making disciples, developing leaders, and planting churches.

RESTORATION

Church planting is not the end goal. The expansion of God’s kingdom and the concomitant restoration of our cities is the true end goal. Planting churches is merely a means to that end.

We long for church planters who are far more concerned about God's redemptive mission than they are about making a name for themselves. And we need churches more concerned about making an impact in their community, meeting real needs, and seeing people's lives changed than they are with becoming the coolest church plant in the city. At the heart of this value is the rule and reign of King Jesus. The discussion on this value will address church planting as a means to an end: the importance of serving your city and the need for collaboration with others in order to see true restoration take place.

These three values fuel everything we do as a network. Our hope and prayer is that God will use this network to send into the harvest laborers who multiply themselves for the expansion of God's kingdom throughout North America.

CHAPTER 1

FAMILY: BROTHERS LOCKING ARMS IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

NOAH OLDHAM

If you've spent any amount of time in ministry, you've probably learned that ministry can be lonely. If you venture out to a new city to plant a church, you'll learn this very quickly at a whole new level. At Send Network, we understand loneliness and isolation are real dangers for church planters. That's why one of our core values is "family," which among planters manifests specifically as "brotherhood." This aspect of the family value is important to us because we believe it is absolutely essential for every planter to have real, life-giving relationships with others in order to plant a healthy church that will reach its community, makes disciples, and multiply itself.

But belief isn't enough. If we are going to see this value become a reality across North America, planters must embrace it themselves. Here are three ways planters can find brotherhood where they are ministering.

YOU FIND BROTHERHOOD BY BUILDING IT

The No. 1 question I get asked by planters on this subject is, "How do I find brotherhood?" My response is always the same: "You don't find brotherhood by looking for it. You find brotherhood by building it." Building anything takes investment, and relationships are no different. If we are going to experience the kind of brotherhood God made us

for — and that we need to succeed in “the long obedience” without burning out, bailing out, or failing out — we have to be willing to invest the necessary time, resources, and vulnerability for fostering deep, authentic relationships with one another.

My dad often tells me, “Someone has to lead. It might as well be you.” If brotherhood doesn’t exist in your area, or if it doesn’t exist at the level you desire, don’t wait for someone else to do the heavy lifting. Roll up your relational sleeves and get to work! It might be that part of your call to your city was not only to plant your church, but to build brotherhood for planters for generations to come.

YOU FIND BROTHERHOOD BY BEING IT

In Colossians 4, Paul describes men with whom he’s walking in brotherhood using phrases like: “faithful minister,” “fellow workers,” “fellow prisoner,” “faithful and beloved brother,” “one of you,” “beloved physician,” and “beloved brothers.”

Look at all those adjectives! This isn’t just rhetoric for Paul and his team. It was how the truth laid out in this whole letter has manifested in their lives. The gospel made them these things. The Good News takes everyday, ordinary people, and it sets them to gospel purpose as disciples of Jesus. And here’s the truth we need to see: The gospel, rightly believed and applied, will bring us together as brothers. But make no mistake, we won’t find these men unless we are willing to *be* these men. So the call for us as Send Network is to build brotherhood by being brothers to one another.

YOU FIND BROTHERHOOD BY BOLSTERING IT

Brotherhood is developed through consistency over a long period of time. Here are four ways you can bolster life-giving brotherhood in your city.

1. Pulpit

Every preacher needs a break from time to time. An amazing way to build brotherhood is by inviting other planters in your city to share your pulpit. My church hosts a “Church Planter Weekend” a couple times a year where we bring in different

planters we partner with to preach at our different services. The added bonus is that not only do I grow in my love for these planters, but my church does as well.

2. Purse

One tremendous way to build brotherhood is by investing some of the money designated for outside missions to another church planter in your city. Jesus told us that where our treasure is our heart will be also. Give to a planter, and watch your brotherhood grow.

3. Pooling (intellectual and physical) resources

I planted a church over a decade ago, and since then I've been able to partner with dozens of new planters by sharing our church's physical and intellectual resources. For instance, we bought a portable baptistery that we love to loan out. Twenty years from now I can't wait to think about all the new believers baptized in that cattle trough! Likewise, a system that may have taken us months or years to develop needs only days or hours for another planter to adjust to their context. Sharing these resources is easy, and sharing these resources builds brotherhood.

4. Party

Finally, one of the greatest ways to build brotherhood, and then put it on display, is by celebrating one another's milestones. Do you have a fellow planter launching across town this Sunday? Ask another pastor to preach for you and head over to sit on the front row of the new plant. Know of a planter celebrating his first anniversary? Invite a handful of other planters to take him out to lunch to celebrate what God has done. These planters won't only remember your kind gesture, they'll never be able to forget it.

Real, life-giving relationships that catalyze a multiplication movement and bring restoration through the hope of the gospel are attainable. But the common factor is you. As the planter, you must be willing to

build it, you must be willing to embody it, and you must be willing to see it grow and develop as you invest time, energy, and vulnerability to bolster it in your context. Brotherhood is possible. Let's do it together!

CHAPTER 2

FAMILY: SISTERS LOCKING ARMS IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

KATHY LITTON

BETTER TOGETHER: A CALL TO SISTERHOOD

Jen Wilkin states that women are “essential and indispensable to the mission of the church.” Her words certainly ring powerfully true for a planting wife, as her full partnership is critical. She is a vital leader and missionary. She often shares the entrepreneurial spirit of her husband and shoulders tremendous responsibilities at home, on the job, and in the church. She truly is “essential and indispensable” in the life of a church plant.

While planting wives pour generously into the health and well-being of those around her, she simultaneously may be neglecting her own well-being and soul care.

There is a tendency for isolation among planting wives, and the reasons are valid. She has no margin, exhaustion is always lurking, and she struggles to find the relational energy it takes to build community.

Choosing isolation may seem expedient, noble, or even a preference — yet it is dangerous. Remaining disconnected does far more than

make us feel alone. It actually weakens us and leaves us exposed to multiplied temptations. We are vulnerable.

“Solitude is a gift from God. Isolation is a tool of the enemy.”

— Carey Nieuwhof

1 Peter 5:8 presents sobering instructions to “be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Just as a lion lures its prey into isolation to devour them, Satan has a similar tactic. Don’t be naïve.

I say this to planting wives with the utmost urgency: *resist isolation!* You really are better together; doing life and ministry alone does not end well.

Locking arms in life and ministry as sisters offers you:

1. Understanding

Few things are more isolating than being misunderstood. Planting is a unique challenge, and few understand its demands. Hurt and frustration are easily born when wives are met with unhelpful, uninformed perspectives on their calling and world. When others understand the sacrifice, uncertainty and constant battle against discouragement, it is gift to a weary, burdened heart.

2. Support

Many planting families find themselves far from home. When demands or crises arise that require helping hands, support is hard to find. Building a new loving, caring community shrinks the painful loss of not having family nearby. Yet such community cannot be built without intentionality and effort. The Bible reminds us: A sister is born for adversity (Prov. 17:17).

3. Sharpening

Women sharpen women. Sisters in your own city harbor rich resources of wisdom, experience, expertise, and shared

passion. Peer-to-peer learning is a rich outcome when women connect and collaborate. Tremendous synergy is created when female leaders living on gospel mission sharpen one another. They become a mighty spiritual force.

4. **Laughter and Fun**

Women carry complex, heavy loads in their daily lives. Perhaps they are prone to fall into a trap of taking themselves too seriously. Their hearts need laughter and fun. When wives gather, I love watching as laughter washes over them and brings healing into their lives. It just takes a few short moments for the initial awkwardness to fade and for laughter to fill the room. They leave a little lighter with a little more gas in the tank. “A joyful heart is good medicine” (Prov. 17:22).

Sisterhood isn’t optional; it’s a necessity.

Sisterhood provides women with an absolutely necessary ally. ‘Ally’ originates from the Latin word *alligare*, meaning “to bind to,” like nations that are allies in wartime — they who bind together for the sake of the mission and to protect one another. Why do nations become allies? They recognize it is a necessity because they understand they are *better together* for the sake of themselves and mission.

Sisterhood ultimately is about the mission of the hope of the gospel. When your foot first hits the soil of San Diego, Portland, Kansas City, or whatever city you and your spouse are planting, your purpose is to demonstrate the heart of God and share the reality of the gospel. Other women in your city share those deep longings and calling. When women “bind together” as allies, they become infinitely stronger. Collectively, they become a mighty spiritual force.

The Great Commission is a collective calling, given to the ultimate community — the church. We don’t just need each other. It’s more than that.

“God intentionally sets mission beyond us in order to require us to work together, calling us out of isolation into dependence.” — Hannah Anderson

Few of us want to be dependent, and yet the mission of the gospel is beyond us, demanding that we lock arms with each other.

Can the gospel be accelerated when women truly bind together as allies on the same mission? It most certainly can! Don't underestimate the mighty spiritual force of a group of women locking arms passionately, collectively for the sake of the gospel and the glory of God.

Sisters, we are better together.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

— Hebrews 10: 24-25

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

— Romans 15:5-6

CHAPTER 3

FAMILY: CHURCHES LOCKING ARMS IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

DUSTIN SCHADT

My two brothers are smarter than me. Their near-perfect SAT scores and exemplary behavior often stirred up in me a spirit of jealousy and competition.

Now as a lead pastor, I've resolved to not allow a spirit of jealousy and competition to creep into my perspective on other like-minded churches and fellow pastors in our area. Instead, I want to see fellow pastors and their churches like family.

In locking arms in life and ministry with churches in our area, we have experienced three great blessings.

BEARING BURDENS TOGETHER

First, family helps us through the tough times. There is something special about sitting across the table from a fellow pastor or kingdom soldier and knowing they understand what you are feeling. Pain in ministry may come as a result of tough decisions, mistakes we've made, or the nature of ministry itself. We listen to hurting people, draw near to the broken-hearted, and bear burdens. Knowing that others truly feel what we feel brings comfort and peace.

Fellow pastors and I talk about how ministry affects our family and our own emotional and spiritual well-being. We discuss what rest looks like for us and encourage one another toward more healthy methods of processing the burdens we bear. Hurts can become the soil where sin grows, and sharing our hurts with others allows us to hear gospel truth in our struggle.

You can't hurry up and make friends. We need others who already know us. It has been said that if you don't heal what hurt you, you'll bleed on those who didn't cut you. Let's not develop scars in ministry that we haven't processed with dear friends. Maybe you can start by making a list of like-minded churches in your area, find their contact info on their website and reach out to them for breakfast, coffee, or lunch. Before you talk about ministry ideas or strategies, ask them how they're doing, about their family, and what they do to recharge. It might be tough to line up your busy schedules, but I promise your time will not be wasted. We've also held overnight getaways with a close group of pastors in our area. I'm so grateful for my pastor friends who at times looked me in the eyes and simply told me, "It's going to be OK."

ENCOURAGEMENT AND CELEBRATION

Second, family makes the good times even sweeter. What if instead of a spirit of competition and critique, we had a spirit of encouragement and celebration among our churches? If we truly envision a sense of family among churches, we don't need to be the jealous brother or sister. Instead, we can be the uplifting voice of admiration and praise. James 5:13-14 tells us to pray for the sick, but we're also told to sing praise if we are cheerful. What power there could be if the hurting churches in our areas could hear from those who are in a season of celebration!

On a recent sabbatical, I was able to visit a dear friend's new church plant on Sunday morning. Our fellowship sent a message of unity and brotherhood to their congregation and allowed me a morning to not plan and execute, but rather to sit, savor, and worship King Jesus along-

side a dear friend. We're all sowing into the same kingdom — one that will never perish and can never be washed away. When we celebrate with one another, we communicate a sense of vision and hope, and we lift up Jesus as the hero of our story.

HELP IN PRACTICAL MATTERS

Third, family helps us go farther. The African proverb rings true, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” There is no reason to reinvent the wheel. Churches in our area have helped one another with kids’ ministry check-in systems and processes, accounting software and practices, counseling referrals, using one another’s buildings, staff transitions, parent training events, worship service outlines, sermon series breakdowns, and even catering sources. At times we will have a member move farther away from our church, or we’ll have a member ask about a church for a friend in a surrounding community. If we know and love other churches in our community, we can make recommendations and facilitate connections.

There is much kingdom work to be done. Regardless of how many churches are in our area, there will always be more people to reach with the gospel. In order to be emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy for the task, we need one another. Let’s not compete with one another as strangers. Instead, let’s go together.

CHAPTER 4

MULTIPLICATION THROUGH DISCIPLE-MAKING

CLINT CLIFTON

Disciple-making is the foundation of church planting. If you want to lead your church to plant new churches, start by making disciples. While it's possible to plant churches without making disciples, you won't make disciples without seeing new churches planted as a result. New churches are an inevitable byproduct of maturing Christians.

The church's job is to make disciples; the disciple's job is to make churches. I'm not saying every Christian should plant a church, but I am saying every Christian has a role to play in the establishment and renewal of churches.

THE DISCIPLESHIP VORTEX

I fear we have confused knowledge and discipleship. Christians seem to believe that maturity in the faith has to do mostly with biblical knowledge. Churches cater to this delusion by providing an endless stream of courses that promise to mature the Christian into Christ-likeness through information, without leading them to any particular destination. Members are encouraged to spend their entire Christian lives learning the Word of God but are rarely encouraged to use that knowledge to bless the church or the world. This is like practicing a sport but never intending to play in a game.

Jesus' little brother even warned us against this type of folly by writing, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). Paul, a man who spent his early life acquiring biblical knowledge, claims, "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 1:8).

A DESTINATION FOR EVERY DISCIPLE

What my church called "Destinations for Discipleship" is a very practical step you can take in your disciple-making that will drastically increase the odds those you teach will act on what they've learned.

Here's how it works: I never enter into a disciple-making relationship without a specific destination in mind. For example, let's say I meet a 19-year-old enlisted Marine named Ben in my community who wants to grow in his faith. The first time I sit down with him, I'm going to try to determine:

- Is there evidence this young man is born again?
- Is there a sin or a set of sins that dominate his life?
- What is stopping him from having a meaningful ministry to those he works and lives with?
- What is the most mature version of his future self?

Based on my findings from these questions and other questions like them, I would try to determine a specific measurable goal for our time together in discipleship. Maybe Ben needs to be convinced that he's not truly a Christian; a possible destination for his discipleship is to see him come to true faith in Christ. Maybe he needs to shake a pornography addiction; that, too, is a possible destination. Perhaps he needs some guidance and mentorship on becoming a better evangelist to the guys in his barracks; that's another destination. The point is that my time with him is not arbitrary but intentional and measured. I may say something to him like, "Ben, I think if you knew better how to share the gospel with fellow Marines you could make a big difference in your unit. Would you be willing to allow me to help you grow in that area over the next six weeks?"

THE VALUE OF A TIMELINE

In my context, people are moving all the time. Marines may be stationed here for a time as short as nine weeks. At the most, they're here for two to three years. This reality has taught me the value of placing every destination on a timeline. We know our time together will be limited to a few short weeks or years. So, if we're going to make any real progress in discipleship, it's going to happen relatively quickly. Of course, our timelines don't hold up, but it's better to have a timeline that adjusts than to have no urgency as we work toward our discipleship destinations. Determining destinations for the time you spend making disciples will dramatically increase your effectiveness as a disciple-maker and ultimately increase your ability to produce leaders for a ministry in church planting.

CHAPTER 5

MULTIPLICATION THROUGH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

NOAH OLDHAM

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul has a lot to say. He speaks about the pre-eminence of Christ, the gospel of grace, and unity in the church. He speaks to how Christians should interact in a number of different relationships and about fending off the fiery darts of Satan. But maybe one of the most overlooked subjects Paul writes about in the book of Ephesians is his instruction in developing leaders.

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul writes,

And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the

truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

In this short text, I see at least four instructions for developing leaders.

BUILD A DIVERSE TEAM

Paul makes it clear that God means for a plurality of diversely gifted leaders to lead the church. In verse 11, we see what many consider to be five different leadership categories. And no matter how gifted any one planter is, he will never be thoroughly gifted in all five categories. Admitting this is critical. Once a planter admits that he can't *be* all things and *do* all things, he is opening up his church to the possibility of tremendous growth and the maturity that comes with developing leaders.

REPRODUCE LEADERS BY EQUIPPING OTHERS

This truth could be communicated in a number of different ways. In its simplest form, Paul is telling us "every member is a minister." God never meant for the elders or staff pastors to be the ones doing the majority of "ministry" the church performs.

Instead, according to verse 12, their job is to equip each member with the training, opportunities, and resources to use the gifts God has given them for His glory and the joy of the church. When a plurality of diversely gifted leaders are equipping every member to use their own natural and spiritual gifts as God designed and desires, the number of potential leaders doesn't grow by addition, but exponentially. Because this is true, the planter is most productive, not when he's getting everything done himself, but when he's equipping others to do the work with him.

GROW POTENTIAL LEADERS BY SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Verse 15 may be one of the most quoted texts pulled out of its natural context. However, when it is read as God meant to communicate it to

us, it has to be understood as a leadership principle. According to Paul, the only way the church grows in depth of maturity into the image of Christ — and avoids the confusion of being unmoored to the gospel — is by speaking the truth in love. Potential leaders don't become the kind of leaders God wants and the church needs if current leaders are not willing to be used in their sanctification by being clear about where they stand and yet pointing them to where they need to go. With honesty, clarity, and kindness, we are called to develop leaders by telling them the truth.

VALUE GIFTS THAT DON'T LOOK LIKE YOURS

Every part of the body matters; every person in the church is necessary. Paul not only makes this clear here in Ephesians 4:16, but all throughout his letters. While the natural tendency of every leader is to focus on developing leaders who are a lot like him, valuing gifts that don't look like his own will keep him focused on developing a plurality of diverse leaders. Developing leaders is important. It has been said that everything rises and falls on leadership. So praise be to God that Jesus is the ultimate leader of His church, and if we keep our eyes on Him, listen to the Spirit, and take our cues from Scripture, His church will prosper!

CHAPTER 6

MULTIPLICATION THROUGH CHURCH PLANTING

DEAN FULKS

The New Testament describes the church's relationship to Jesus as a marriage. This is a helpful image because, as wonderful as marriage can be, it doesn't always make sense.

The logical result of making disciples and developing leaders will be planting churches. Over the past few decades, many have unsuccessfully made "churches" the goal. However, Jesus was clear that we are to "*seek first the kingdom.*" Churches are God's means for spreading kingdom-life throughout the world. It's a subtle but important difference.

It changes the way we plant churches. It changes our expectations for the churches we plant. Here are two examples: one from two centuries ago and one from two decades ago.

Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian and revivalist, was voted out of his church after more than 20 years of ministry, with a vote of some 200 to 23. Why? Biblically educated, thoroughly doctrinal and reformed Puritan people wanted church polity their own way.

A couple of decades ago, the church growth movement emphasized growing churches over growing the kingdom. (If I'm honest, I totally missed this early on during my ministry years). So we measured success by how many people were attending church instead of how many churches were multiplying.

IT'S LIKE MARRIAGE

Sometimes husbands and wives use the same words, but over time realize they have very different expectations. The really tough part is that sometimes you don't know there are problems, until there are *big* problems. A lack of communication, financial inconsistencies, and parenting pressures can slowly, quietly erode wedded bliss over a period of years.

An ever-steepening decline in the number of churches demands that we plant more and more new congregations. However, the way we plant them will help determine how they impact the culture in the long run. Some good pre-marital counseling is a best friend for a young church, as well as a young marriage.

PLANTING NEEDS EXCELLENT ASSESSMENT, MISSIONAL TRAINING, AND CONSISTENT SUPPORT.

Assessment means that planters clearly know the areas that prove their calling and the areas of improvement for their calling. When they say, "I do," husbands have a basic knowledge of what it means to be providers and protectors. However, they don't know — can't know — the amount of sanctification marriage will require of them. Sometimes, I think the failure of pre-marital counseling in this area may actually be a plus! However, if they hang in, the joys of marriage and family far outweigh the required changes. All this also is true for church planters.

PLANTERS NEED SOLID TRAINING

For too many years, church planters have been handed a book and given a pat on the back. We need to train planters like we train international missionaries. They need to speak the language of their ZIP code. They must be able to understand the values of their local people

groups. They need to understand core team development and have realistic timelines based on typical responses in their culture. When someone sits down with a engaged woman and helps her see that her fiancé is a work in progress — that he's not a finished product and that maybe he isn't her dad — it's a huge favor to her. Small things can make all the difference — for both husbands and planters.

PLANTERS NEED SUPPORT

It's imperative that a planter knows someone is "holding the rope" for their plant. They need a Sending Church, a network of planters, and a good coach. Now, having this web of support is *not* a necessity, but the likelihood of success climbs with each pillar.

Young couples from loving families, who get great pre-marital counseling and also are blessed with good friends, have a solid foundation for their future. All of these aren't necessary for a healthy marriage, but they all help.

Called, gifted people, well-assessed, with solid training, supported by a network that's holding the rope — these churches can change the world. They can make kingdom-disciples and multiply for the glory of God throughout the world. It's not easy. In fact, it's incredibly difficult. That's why it's so rare, like marriage. But when it's right, it's a beautiful gift from God to the world.

CHAPTER 7

RESTORATION THROUGH THE GREAT REQUIREMENT

DHATI LEWIS

Have you ever heard the saying, “Save the soul, and the rest will follow”? This unfortunately characterizes the historic actions of many American evangelicals. We’ve reduced the gospel to the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples,” and the Great Commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength ... and love your neighbor as yourself.” Yet, in all our evangelistic zeal, we have tragically missed a key component of the gospel: restoration through the Great Requirement.

We see the Great Requirement in Micah 6:8:

Mankind, he has told each of you what is good
and what it is the Lord requires of you:
to act justly,
to love faithfulness,
and to walk humbly with your God.

God requires us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him. The Great Requirement does not happen separately from our

commission and commandment. When each are done biblically, they are intricately tied together. Simply put, making disciples should be an expression of loving God and our neighbors and always should lead toward holistic restoration. In the same way, holistic restoration should be an expression of loving God and our neighbors and always should lead toward making disciples.

I serve as the lead pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Our central mission is to unleash healthy people to do ministry where life exists. Over the years, I have seen firsthand the importance of addressing the many facets of life to make healthy disciples and to effectively engage your community. To holistically make disciples, we have to address aspects of the spiritual, emotional, economic, and social dynamics of our communities. At Send Network, we are using four pillars to build the framework of community restoration.

SPIRITUAL PILLAR

Historically, the spiritual pillar is where the church spends the majority of their focus. Too often, churches have shifted the jobs of community restoration to only nonprofits, ignoring the fact that God has uniquely positioned churches to serve and restore systemic and community brokenness. And while our pillars address more than spiritual needs, we want to ensure we don't lose focus on the spiritual needs of the heart. Many evangelicals carry a fear that if we engage in social issues, we will end up losing the essence and core of the gospel. But our plan is to double down, by partnering with local seminaries to help undergird what local churches are doing to spiritually equip their members.

EMOTIONAL PILLAR

We are working to establish a counseling network to allow small churches and church plants to offer accessible counseling for their communities. I am a firm believer that our emotions are gifts from God to help us live fully in a tragic world. But the brokenness of our world often leaves people with festering, unattended wounds. We want to equip and empower local churches to play a role in walking their members, neighbors, and community members toward emotional health and healing.

ECONOMIC PILLAR

As we address systemic issues in our community, one of the major factors to consider is economic stability. Communities thrive when individuals are given opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed. Job readiness training is a great way for local churches to partner with the community to create enriching opportunities. Sustainable restorative efforts are a tangible way for the community to see how God can take brokenness and radically transform lives. This means helping people find jobs, keep jobs, and advance in the workplace.

SOCIAL PILLAR

The social pillar is where we partner with local nonprofits and para-church ministries to address social needs in our communities. The needs of each community are unique, so the social pillar may look a little different, depending on the community. This pillar will address issues ranging from educational disparities to racial reconciliation and political issues. As we partner with local nonprofits and para-church ministries, we hope to maximize the impact of local churches. The gospel calls us to take action and lead the way in reconciling broken aspects of our community. We need to stand in the gap and engage when we see disparity.

IT'S NOT A PRIORITY UNTIL IT'S YOUR PROBLEM

The gospel does not neglect restoration; it lifts it up. When we decide to stand in the gap, we can have a systemic impact in our community. At Blueprint, one of the ways we engaged our neighborhood was by stepping in the gap when we saw disparity between schools in our neighborhood. A problem is not a real problem until it's *your* problem. The issues of our neighborhood schools became our issues because our children and the children of other church members were experiencing it firsthand. It wasn't just that kids in the community were being underserved by their school, but *our* kids were being underserved, too. So our church family who lived in the neighborhood rallied to address real needs and partner with teachers and school leaders to undergird their efforts and see powerful change take place.

HOW THIS HAPPENS

In Matthew 9, Jesus told His disciples that “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” In context, the harvest is a multitude of people who were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” A shepherd is primarily responsible for being with the sheep. Jesus was distressed because there was a multitude of people without anyone to be with them.

The same is true for many of the neighborhoods in our cities. If we want to truly engage with our neighbors, we cannot settle for a few hours of charity work here and there. We must, like Christ, be with people so we can truly engage in life-on-life disciple making and holistic community restoration. And holistic restoration happens in two ways: proximity and relationship.

1. Proximity.

Living in the community is key: being present and indigenous to the area we want to minister to and find out the needs of our community.

2. Relationships.

I might not have a problem with something, but if my wife has a problem with something, it becomes my problem. When we enter into authentic relationships with our neighbors, their problems become ours because Christ has called us to share each other’s burdens. Our compassion compels us through the Great Commandment to love when crisis strikes. Yet, for many, crisis has been the norm for generations.

Our conviction pushes us forward in the Great Commission to make disciples. Yet we stop there, hoping that if we save the soul, everything else will fall in line. In doing so, we have failed to realize that our refusal to validate our neighbors’ current struggles is often more offensive than the gospel itself. But when God’s people engage holistically in the broken aspects of their community, a beautiful depiction of the gospel is on display for the whole community to see.

CHAPTER 8

RESTORATION THROUGH WHOLENESS IN CHRIST

KEMPTON TURNER

Restoration is a beautiful thing — be it a house or a heart. If you break down the word ‘restoration’ you have *re* which means “again,” and *store* which means “to put back into alignment with its original purpose.” To restore is to bring back a soul, a person, an environment, or a community to its originally intended plan of peace and wholeness with the Creator God.

Several years ago, God set into motion a restoration plan I never expected. He sent me back home, to East Saint Louis, Illinois, to plant a church. In East Saint Louis, we ultimately want to see broken, sinful humans, like myself, restored to a right relationship with God by turning from sin and trusting in Jesus Christ alone for free and full forgiveness. From that outflow, we believe we will see the gospel transform the community in such a way that multitudes of lives are rescued from God’s wrath and welcomed into God’s peace and love.

EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING

Healing — closely related to the concept of restoration — is a common theme in Scripture. If you look at the Hebrew word *shalom*,

which means “peace and wholeness”, you begin to see the restorative, holistic beauty of the gospel. The lasting wholeness and healing this world longs for, only comes through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

On the cross, Jesus did not just die to bring us to heaven, but to also bring heaven to us, by healing our broken hearts. Christ offers real healing from even our deepest cuts. Because God is perfect in love and power, He does not partially rescue and restore His redeemed people. He restores us completely from the inside out. He takes both the spiritual and emotional aspects of our hurt and does a complete overhaul to restore even the pieces we thought were unredeemable. Words like ‘peace,’ ‘joy,’ and ‘love’ — the fruit of the Spirit — capture God’s heart to restore our spiritual and emotional wellbeing. When weary souls truly encounter this kind of love, joy, and peace offered in the gospel, inward transformation begins, as God gradually restores the whole person, not just parts.

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF RESTORATION

Restoration is an attractive topic and theme, but ultimately, it’s all about *who* we’re restored to. Jesus didn’t come just to create a beautiful word or idea called restoration. He came to restore us back to God (1 Pet. 3:18). God is the Healer and Soul-satisfier to whom Jesus came to restore our souls. Jesus has brought those redeemed by His blood to a delicious buffet of living *soul* food— loaded with living bread and living water. And now we get to invite starving souls to taste and see that the Lord is good (John 6:35)! And it should be our great joy to invite all people — from our neighbors to the nations — to this healing and holy feast.

Gospel restoration is contagious, because when you have been loved, rescued, healed, restored, and satisfied in the deepest places of your soul, it compels you to invite others into it! I want to invite everyone to experience this Jesus. The Good Shepherd who “restores my soul” (Ps. 23.3) in the fullest, deepest, sweetest sense of the word. The way

He has satisfied my heart compels me to invite others to praise and exalt the Lord with me! “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!” (Ps. 34:1-3)

In East Saint Louis, we long for the Lord to holistically redeem and restore a broken city back to Christ. By God’s grace, this is happening as we identify the broad, tangible needs of the community. Love moves us to be present in people’s everyday lives and struggles. We are simply striving to *incarnate* and *dwell* in the messiness of life, loss, and laughter with real people in our community like Jesus did. He went to the well, met with the women, went to the streets and festivals and hung out where the people were. With the Spirit’s help, we should seek to mobilize people who love Jesus to go out and love for the sake of gospel restoration. Psalm 23 is a beautiful picture of restoration: the Shepherd and the weary, wandering sheep.

Our gracious Lord reminds us that He is our shepherd, and we don’t need anything. He beckons us to stop nibbling in other pastures and pleasures that are poisonous to our souls and to stay close to Him. It is a great mercy to have a God who promises to restore our souls! The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), and He delights to restore wholeness, peace, and joy to the part of us that’s going to live forever — our souls. And He does His shepherding, restoring work in our communities through His Church — one soul, one house, and one block at a time.

A STORY ONLY GOD COULD WRITE

I have personally experienced so much restoration in my own life. Much of the brokenness we encounter comes from the family hurt of our past. I am so thankful that when God redeems broken sinners like myself, He begins to transform us spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. I have experienced God’s deep love healing emotional scars caused by childhood pain.

I was taken from my birth mother as a young child, due mainly to her drug addiction and imprisonment. And yet, when God called me back to East Saint Louis to preach the gospel and plant a church, the last person I expected to walk through the doors was my mother. She came, heard the gospel, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ! She was the first person ever baptized at City of Joy Fellowship. Now, in her 60s, she's beginning to see that God has a wonderful plan for her, and no matter her age or past sins and struggles, Jesus forgives and heals and restores. I never anticipated the restoration of a broken mother-and-son relationship, but it's been a beautiful illustration of gospel restoration. It's truly a story only God could write, and I pray He would continue to write in my life, family, church, and city. I pray the same for you, as together, we praise the God who restores. And soon, He will return to restore *all* things to Himself. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

CHAPTER 9

RESTORATION THROUGH CONNECTION

ASHLEY AUSTIN

In 2013, God led me and my family from Biloxi, Mississippi, to Victoria, British Columbia, to introduce people to Jesus and to plant life-giving churches. We didn't want to plant a church that looked like the churches we had been in previously, because we were in a different context than the southeastern United States. We wanted to plant a church *for* Canada, so we had to learn a new ministry context, build relationships, serve the community, and cover it all in a lot of prayer. Starting in a living room with only 15 people — nine adults and six kids — by the grace of God, He has grown us to about 350 regular attenders at our first site and then a second site on the other end of Victoria as well.

Restoration looks a little bit different, depending on the ministry context you're in. In a city where there's a lot of poverty, you might provide basic necessities like food, shelter, school supplies, or education. In a place like Victoria, which is a very wealthy and a highly educated city, loneliness is a common thread that pervades the city. There's a lack of community and friendship because people live on an island for a reason: They're OK with the isolation. The high cost of living and the need for both parents to work long hours also facilitates a lack of meaningful relationships. Restoration looks different in our community than what people may think when they hear the word 'resto-

ration,' but brokenness is everywhere, so restoration is vital, no matter the context.

Here is how we approached community context in planting Canvas Church:

1. Learn Your Ministry Context

As God began to put people in front of me, I engaged in conversation and ask: "What do you enjoy most about living in Victoria?" "What are some things that would be good for me to know as a new person living in Victoria?" "What are the greatest needs in our city?" "What could be done to make our city an even better place?" We approached our new context as learners and avoided making assumptions about the community before engaging with the locals. We used every conversation and interaction as a way to learn more about our city.

2. Build Relationships

In a city where isolation is often the natural tendency, I was proactive in creating rhythms in my schedule that put me in front of people as frequently as possible. I would go to coffee shops, coach youth soccer, and frequent the gym. We began inviting people over and have hosted more than 500 people since moving here. Interestingly enough, no one in our city has told us no when they've been invited. That seems like a clear sign to me that people are definitely looking for connection and genuine community.

3. Serve the Community

From the start, we wanted to be a church that served our community and added value. We wanted to be a church that 10 years from now our community would say, "We're a better place because Canvas is here." One of the main things God led us to do was start summer camps for kids. My undergraduate degree is in sports business, so it was a perfect outlet for

me. There's a lot of kids' camps in Victoria because parents are looking for quality experiences for their kids during the summer while they work. Because these camps get pretty pricey, and we weren't looking to make money off of it, we created week-long, high-quality camps at a fraction of the price of others. Restoration came by also communicating biblical truth through the camps. We came in and met a need of the community, while also sharing the gospel.

4. Everything Starts and Ends with Prayer

We have seen God do things only God could do. So even as it relates to identifying the areas of restoration, it's always started with, "God show us what you're doing, and show us the role we need to play in what you're doing. Show us the needs in our community." We covered everything in prayer from the beginning, and I would spend a day in each part of the city, walking around and praying. As we prayed, God revealed His plan for the direction of Canvas Church.

FROM ISOLATION TO CONNECTION TO RESTORATION

The greatest need in every community is going to be unique to the area. You can't just go in and provide what you think they need before you've taken the time to understand the city.

One of Victoria's needs is connection. At Canvas, we have about 40 countries represented every week in our congregation, so we've invited them into our family and given them a place to belong. We've created a sense of belonging, a sense of family, and a sense of community for a city longing for relationships. And through that sense of belonging, it has led to countless opportunities to communicate the gospel.

If restoration is taking something disconnected and making it whole, when we join God in what He's doing, He restores even the most unlikely of situations. John 14 records that, right before Calvary, Jesus told His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." And then right after He rises from the dead and appears to His dis-

ciples, the first thing He tells them is, “Peace be with you.” There is a connection between peace being wholeness and restoration. If we plant life-giving churches, learn our new ministry context, look to see how God is working and join God in bringing wholeness to our community, restoration will naturally follow.

CONCLUSION

As a network, we count it a joy to give our time, effort, and energy to the task of aiding churches in bringing the hope of the gospel to North America. To do so, we need more and more churches and individuals embodying the values explained in this book. We need churches and individuals who love and serve one another out of a heart of genuine family. We need churches who strive to multiply disciples, leaders, and churches. And we need all of us to embrace a kingdom vision that prompts us to live each day with missionary intentionality.

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